

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 27 -- John Karmelich

1. My title for Chapter 27 is, "Giving the devil his due".
 - a) That cliché, means that one has to acknowledge that Satan has incredible power, resources and "cleverness" in his ability to deceive mankind.
 - b) God of course, limits his power, but that power is great nonetheless.
 - c) This is the chapter of the events leading up to Jesus death and the death itself.
 - d) The whole chapter has a tone of darkness and evil to it.
 - e) The expression "it is darkest before the dawn" is also appropriate here.
 - i) We are going to see the forces of evil at its worse prior to the resurrection.
2. This chapter is man' (non-Christian-man) darkest hour, where they get to verbally and physically express their rebellion against Jesus.
 - a) The chapter is sort of an accumulation of people who refuse to bow down to Jesus.
 - b) We not only read of our Lord killed, but suffered and killed.
 - i) We'll discuss the necessity of this suffering in this lesson.
 - c) We also read of Pontius Pilate, who in many ways represents those who want to be neutral about Jesus, but end up equally as guilty as those who hate Jesus.
 - i) The point is there is no neutrality allowed with Jesus, one is either "for him" or "against him" and your eternity destiny depends upon your answer.
3. Before I start on Chapter 27, I want to remind you of the primary purpose of these studies:
 - a) My primary mission is to teach how the bible applies to our lives.
 - b) One can teach the bible as history, the bible as factual, the bible as prophetic, etc.
 - i) I dabble in all of these areas through the studies.
 - c) My point is that this study is not meant as an all-inclusive history lesson on the events of Jesus suffering and crucifixion. I couldn't fit that in 12 pages anyway!
 - d) Each week I pray for God to show me what He wants me to learn and what he wants me to pass on in these lessons. With that said, I try to include what I believe is most relevant.
 - e) As for this week's lesson, it is mainly to understand why Jesus had to go through all of this and what that means to us on a moment-by-moment basis.
 - f) The second overriding thing is what to expect from "rebellious-man" and the rebellious demonic beings who don't want to bow-the-knee to Jesus.
 - g) Remember Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you". (John 15:20b, NKJV) We can count on that promise.
 - i) I'm a big believer in that "if you are not encountering any spiritual resistance, you may not be making a difference for Jesus".
 - ii) Demonic forces and "rebellious-man" are only going to concentrate their efforts on those who oppose them. One sign that you are working for Jesus is to be aware of spiritual resistance. You don't want to "bring it on", just be aware it is there. If you don't sense any resistance in the first place, pray to God if you are doing what he wants you to be doing in this moment of your life.
4. Chapter 27, Verse 1: Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. ² They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.
 - a) In Verse 59 of the previous chapter, this same group looked for false evidence so that they "could" put Jesus to death. In Verse 1, they came to the "decision" to put him to death.
 - b) Personally, I see this meeting is about "how" they were going to get rid of Jesus.
 - c) As opposed to murdering Jesus themselves, they decided to turn him over to Pilate.
 - i) Legally, they were not allowed to enforce capital punishment. We read in their gospels, in their rage, that they tried to stone Jesus a few times. But, for the record, only the Roman Government could kill someone as punishment for a crime.

- ii) They thought, "If the Romans crucify Jesus, then the people would reject Jesus as the Messiah as we are looking for someone to overthrow Rome".
 - iii) Further, they understood the scripture of "cursed is the man who hangs on a tree".
 - a) This is from Deuteronomy 21:23. Crucifixion "counts" as hanging from a tree. Their rationale is "if Jesus is cursed, then he can't be the Messiah".
 - b) From the Christian point of view, Deut. 21:23 is correct: Jesus is "cursed" by hanging on the cross, as he took our sins upon himself.
 - d) The reason for their death sentence is that Jesus was growing in popularity at their expense. They saw Jesus as a threat to their "status quo" of religious power.
 - i) Remember Satan's rebellion is based on the fact that he wanted to be worshipped as God, and thus he rebelled against God's plan to have Jesus pay for our sins.
 - a) Isaiah said of Satan, "You (Satan) said in your heart... I will make myself like the Most High"... But you are (future prediction) brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. (Isaiah 13:13-15, NIV)
 - ii) People are not much different. Our egos want us to be noticed.
 - iii) There is a need for power and for recognition. Jesus threatened that power structure and thus the decision that he had to die.
 - iv) The world gives Jesus a death sentence by saying, "We don't want you". To worship you is to take away power from ourselves, and we don't want that. While most people would deny that they want Jesus crucified, at the same time, they just wish "those religious Christians would just go away and leave us alone". They come to the same conclusion as this council without even realizing it.
5. Verse 3: When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴ "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." ⁵ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.
- a) Here we have the "remorse" of Judas. One of the key words here is "innocent". Judas realized that he has betrayed "innocent" blood. I don't think Judas would have felt guilty about the betrayal if he had felt that Jesus had committed some great sin or a bad person.
 - b) Let me try to paraphrase Judas' thoughts: "I followed Jesus because he was performing all of these miracles and I was convinced he was the Messiah. Our bible predicts that the Messiah will come one day and set up an eternal government. I want to be part of that and get in on the action. When I discovered that Jesus was setting up this "spiritual kingdom" and was not going to overthrow Rome. They wanted to kill Jesus and kill me. I need to do what have to do in order to save my own life."
 - i) That was his fall. He thought he was "saving" his life by betraying Jesus.
 - ii) Jesus said, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39, NIV)
 - c) So why did Judas hang himself?
 - i) He felt guilty of "killing an innocent guy". He could not live with that guilt so he went out and committed suicide. I don't believe Judas felt he "killed God" as much as he felt remorse for killing an innocent human being.
 - ii) I may be very wrong here, but I also believe it was "demonic forces" that convinced Judas to kill himself. The only unforgivable sin is to deny Jesus as God. Suppose Judas never killed himself. Suppose later in his life, he realized he was wrong and he realized Jesus was God and asked God to forgive him of his sins." Would Judas be saved at that point? This is a "what if" question, so we don't know the answer.

- iii) The reason I mention all of this is of the topic of demonic forces and suicide.
 - a) I am convinced that demonic forces like to kill people and if possible, encourage suicide. Think of all the modern killing spree's where the gunman then goes and takes his or her own life. I am positive there are demonic forces behind those killings.
 - b) My point is, "A dead person cannot confess Jesus as Lord". If Satan can kill you or get you to commit suicide, you cannot turn to Jesus or pray for others, or be a good witness for Christ.
 - c) My point about Judas is to consider the possibility that Satan wanted him dead as to not repent of sins. (I may be wrong about Judas, but I'm convinced I am right on this issue of demonic persecution.)
 - d) I should also mention a comment about Judas in the Book of Acts:
 - i) "With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out." (Acts 1:18 NIV)
 - ii) This is not a contradiction to Judas hanging. I am convinced that after a few days after his hanging, the branch broke and his body fell.
 - iii) My point is that when you study verses in the bible that sound contradictory, study them carefully and you often find they are complimentary.
6. Verse 6: The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money."⁷ So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners.⁸ That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day.⁹ Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel,¹⁰ and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."
- a) If this section were not so sad, you would find it comical.
 - i) This same group of people who condemned Jesus to death was "worried" about what to do with the money Judas has returned.
 - ii) They didn't want to violate their biblical rules on what can be used in the temple.
 - a) This was based on Deuteronomy 23:18, which in direct context is about not bringing harlot's wages or Gentile's offerings into the House of the Lord. That verse in its' broader application, wouldn't allow for "blood money".
 - iii) It never ceases to amaze me how people can "rationalize" sin in order to clear their guilty conscious.
 - a) These guys understood it was murder as they called it "blood money".
 - b) Yet somehow, "That was ok, but oh no, we can't let Judas put thirty silver coins in the treasury because that would be wrong".
 - c) People will often do "religious works" to help placate their guilt of sin.
 - d) It is their hope that in heaven "their good deeds will somehow outweigh their bad deeds" and God will accept them. It was wrong then, and now.
 - e) Jesus said we are to expect persecution. Later, those who commit such actions will find some way to "rationalize it away" with other acts.
 - b) Getting back to the text, one of the obligations of the Jewish people is to bury strangers who die in, or near their place of residence (town or city). (See Deuteronomy 21:1-9).
 - i) So they came up with this brilliant idea of "We can't use Judas money in the temple, but maybe we can use it to cover some of our obligations."
 - ii) This "potter's field" was a dumping ground for used pottery and had little value. Therefore, wherever this place was, it was purchased with this money.
 - c) Matthew says "it has been called the Field of Blood to this day"
 - i) I suspect that the religious leaders were hoping to keep this land deal a secret.
 - ii) Yet, during the early rise of Christianity, this story became notorious.
 - iii) "You may be sure that your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23b, NIV).

- d) There is a classic debate in Christianity about the “Jeremiah” reference.
 - i) Matthew says “Jeremiah’s” prophecy was fulfilled in Verse 9.
 - ii) The quote is an interpretation of a section of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:6-9).
 - iii) The quote in its verbatim is taken from Zechariah 11:12-13.
 - iv) So, did Matthew make a mistake in saying “Jeremiah” when it was Zechariah?
 - a) Some theorize that Zechariah is part of the same scroll of which Jeremiah was the lead-book. Therefore, the “title” of that scroll was Jeremiah.
 - b) Others theorize that Zechariah was “interpreting” Jeremiah.
 - c) Either way, it can be explained.
 - v) Either way, hundreds of years before Jesus was born, there is a prediction that the Messiah’s betrayal was going to be for 30 pieces of silver.
 - vi) To me, the greatest proof of Jesus as the promised Messiah is the hundreds of predictions about him written about Jesus in the Old Testament.
7. Verse 11: Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. ¹² When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³ Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" ¹⁴ But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge--to the great amazement of the governor.
- a) At this point, Jesus was already beaten up. He was then presented to Pilate.
 - b) Pilate was concerned about any military threat against Rome. Here was this beaten up guy standing in front of him. You can almost hear Pilate say sarcastically, “Well, then, you’re the guy who is their king and who is going to overthrow Rome, are you?”
 - c) Jesus answered Pilate’s question. It was the last thing Jesus said to Pilate.
 - i) Over the next set of verses, Jesus kept quiet about all the false charges that were about to be leveled against him. Yet as to the question itself, Jesus simply states the truth that he is “King of Jews” (as well as King of the Universe!).
 - ii) As the Roman Governor, Pilate was also chief judge of the land.
 - a) He was used to people pleading for their lives. He was used to people defending themselves against false charges. Jesus silence impressed him.
 - iii) As I stated in the last lesson, sometimes the best defense against false charges is silence. We dignify charges as legitimate issues if we respond to them. Jesus’ silence is saying in effect, “These charges are not even worthy of my response”.
8. Verse 15: Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶ At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.
- a) I always pictured Pilate as a “bureaucrat”. The rule of a middle manager bureaucrat in a large company is, “How do I get out of this mess without taking the blame?”
 - i) Pilate knew Jesus was innocent of these charges. He probably saw Jesus as “some philosopher teacher” who was popular with the common people.
 - ii) Because the Roman Empire was large, Rome could not afford to have a large army at every location. Therefore, the #1 job of all their governors was “keep the peace and don’t allow rioting against Rome”.
 - a) Pilate probably knew that Jesus was popular, and he didn’t want to start an uprising by killing him.
 - b) At the same time, Pilate had to please the religious establishment as to not get them angry at him. History records that Pilate was not popular in Rome, and protests by the Jewish religious leaders could get him killed.
 - iii) Pilate thought he had a “clever solution” by invoking a local tradition of releasing a prisoner on the Jewish holiday. This tradition was done to help keep the large crowd in Jerusalem from considering revolting against Rome.

9. Verse 19: While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."
- a) Here we have this reference to a "dream" given to Pilate's wife.
 - b) Not much else is known about this dream, as there are no biblical cross-references.
 - c) Personally, I see this as part of "Pilate's trial".
 - i) Technically, Jesus was the one on trial, but when one studies the text carefully, you understand that Jesus was in control of the whole situation and it is always others around him that were on trial.
 - ii) Jews, as well as Romans believed that dreams could be signs from God (or gods, in case of the Romans). I believe this sign given to Pilate's wife was simply more evidence placed in front of Pilate as to Jesus' innocence.
 - iii) The great moral lesson to learn from Pontius Pilate is that there is no neutral ground allowed with Jesus. Enough evidence was presented to him that Pilate should have "done the right thing" and let Jesus go as he was innocent of the crime of rebellion against Rome.
10. Verse 20: But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. ²¹ "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered.
- a) This is the same crowd that hailed Jesus as the Messiah a few days back when Jesus was riding into town on Palm Sunday.
 - b) Now they saw the same Jesus, beaten up, chained in front of Pilate. When they figured that this guy is not going to lead a rebellion against Rome, they turned on Jesus.
 - c) This gets back to the argument that "people are willing to accept Jesus if he becomes their genie in a bottle." To put it another way, "we are more than willing to accept Jesus if he gives us what he wants. We are happy to worship Jesus if we can do it our way".
 - d) The word "Barabbas" means, "Son of the Father". The question becomes "whose father?"
 - i) We know from Mark and Luke's Gospel that Barabbas was guilty of insurrection and murder (Mark 15:7 and Luke 23:19).
 - ii) Jesus said to the Pharisees: "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. (John 5:43 NIV)
 - a) I see Jesus' comments in John 5:43, being "partially fulfilled" with Barabbas. This verse also applies to the Antichrist when he comes.
 - iii) I stated in my introduction that this is "Satan's hour". This is the time when those who are united against Jesus, both human and demonic forces to have their time.
 - iv) Instead of asking for Jesus, they ask for someone who leads rebellion and someone who is guilty of murder. (You can see where I'm going with this! ☺)
 - a) That is what the world does. The world is guilty of "murder" in the aspect of they would rather see Jesus die than accept him as their king. The "murder" is the rejection of Jesus. Insurrection is also at play here.
11. Verse 22a: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked.
- a) This half of Verse 22 is often used in evangelistic rallies.
 - b) In a sense, all people must ask themselves, "What shall I do with Jesus?
 - i) It is the question not just for the Jewish crowd, but also for all humanity. We all must make a decision of what to do with our lives with Jesus.
12. Verse 22b: They all answered, "Crucify him!" ²³ "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"
- a) The classical question to ask here is: "Who is to blame for Jesus' death?"
 - i) Do you blame the Jews in the crowd for asking for his crucifixion?

- ii) Do you blame Pontius Pilate for not having the guts to do the right thing?
 - iii) Chuck Smith, of Calvary Chapel had the best answer I ever heard to this question:
 - a) "If you want to blame someone for the death of Jesus, blame me. He died for my sins".
 - b) The Jewish crowd, Pilate, and all non-believers are all guilty of the crime of rejecting Jesus, not for killing Jesus. Jesus gave up his life freely for our sins.
 - c) In that sense, they are all guilty of "second-degree murder". This is the idea of killing someone without knowing you killed someone".
 - i) Yes they were aware that they sentenced Jesus to death. The reason for this sentence is that they didn't want Jesus to rule over their lives.
 - ii) In the book of Acts, there are several times where Peter refers to the Jews as those who murdered the Messiah. At the same time, Peter asked them to repent, implying that it is not an unforgivable sin.
 - iii) Many of us rejected Jesus for some portion of our lives before we turned our lives over to Him.
 - d) There is a part of me that ponders what Jesus was thinking at this point.
 - i) Here he was, watching the crowd reject him.
 - ii) He was very aware of all of this is going to happen.
 - iii) There had to be a sadness by Jesus for the eternal price they were going to pay for that rejection.
 - iv) Part of me hears Satan whispering to Jesus at this point, "Come on, Jesus, don't go to the cross, look at these people. Just show off your power and you can prove who you are. Are these people really worth it?"
 - v) I have to wonder if Satan was trying to the very end to get Jesus to not take the way of the cross, and used all of this anger and rejection as a way of tempting Jesus by asking, "Is it worth it?" Remember, it was the love for us that made Jesus endure the rejection, mocking, physical suffering and crucifixion
13. Verse 24: When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"
- a) There is a Christian-classic expression to this verse that goes like this:
 - i) If Pilate had washed in the blood of Christ, he would have been innocent. Instead he washed in water proclaiming his innocence. Since there is no neutrality allowed with Jesus, he is condemned in sin.
 - b) In a way, Pilate represents people who are too afraid to stand up for Christ:
 - i) He said Jesus was innocent of the charges against him.
 - ii) There was no crime of which Pilate could convict him.
 - iii) His wife had a dream arguing for his innocence.
 - iv) Instead of doing the right thing, Pilate gave in to the crowd.
 - a) To me, an example of a poor leader is one who is trying to please the crowd as opposed to doing what is right.
14. Verse 25: All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"
- a) Of all the verses in this chapter, this is the one that troubled me.
 - b) Even in my utmost rage at someone, I can't imagine saying, "let me and my kids be responsible for his death". I might say me, but not the kids. ☺
 - c) I take the bible at face value. I believe Matthew was there and recorded it as it was.
 - d) The most "logical" explanation goes back to my opening premise: "Give the devil his due". I take the view that evil-forces are behind such a statement.
 - i) Here was this crowd, rejecting Jesus. They wanted a ruling Messiah, and not a suffering Messiah. They were willing to make such a statement.

- e) This statement of "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" has been misused throughout history. Unfortunately, through the centuries, many horrible things have been done to Jewish people in the "name of Jesus". They use this verse as an excuse.
 - i) For those who know their history, such things as the Crusades, and the Spanish Inquisition performed horrible genocides on Jews. They misused Verse 25 as somehow, "it was acceptable" to do such atrocities.
 - f) This verse has been prophetic in many ways:
 - i) In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Israel. Millions of Jews were killed. This verse is prophetic in that they and many of their children were killed.
 - ii) I may be wrong here, but I also see a "positive prophetic" implication: I do believe there will be a day where God will one day focus again on the Nation of Israel. Romans. This day, which I believe takes place after the 7-year tribulation says that "And so all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26a, NIV).
 - a) My point is when this crowd says "the blood of Jesus be upon us and on our children", they didn't realize it, but the blood-of Jesus is preserving the Nation of Israel despite its nonexistence from 70AD until 1948.
15. Verse 26: Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.
- a) There are great sermons preached under the title, "The Gospel according to Barabbas."
 - i) I stated a few pages back that Barabbas was guilty of insurrection and murder.
 - ii) He should have been crucified for his sins.
 - iii) Yet he was set free as Jesus paid the price (substitute) for his sins.
 - b) Matthew's Gospel does not get into any of the gruesome details of Jesus' flogging.
 - i) In fact, none of the gospels really go into the gory details that we now know are historically true.
 - ii) Matthew's target audience was 1st Century Jews, so they understood crucifixion.
 - iii) Further, I think the brutality behind the suffering of the flogging was too much for the disciples to describe in detail.
 - c) This leads to the question, of why did Jesus have to suffer and die, why not a quick death?
 - a) First of all, it helps to validate that Jesus did actually die before being raised from the dead. If Jesus died a quick death, critics would argue that "He didn't really die, he just fainted and then woke up". All the suffering helps to validate the story of the death and resurrection.
 - ii) Second, it helps us relate to Jesus in our suffering.
 - a) My point is "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger". In life, we have our best growth and maturity moments during the worst of times.
 - b) "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation (Jesus) perfect through suffering." (Hebrews 2:10, NIV)
 - c) "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:18, NIV)
16. Verse 27: Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.
- a) The Jewish nation who rejected Jesus had "their turn" to reject Jesus in front of Pilate.
 - b) Now it is the "non-Jews" turn to reject Jesus.
 - c) This whole paragraph is about Roman soldiers mocking "the King of the Jews".

- d) In the grand scheme of things, I think that God the Father wanted to show that not only do many Jews reject Jesus as their king, but through history many Gentiles will also reject Jesus. We see that in the Roman soldiers here who are mocking Jesus.
 - e) One thing that struck me all through this chapter, and lead to my opening theme is to see this from Satan's perspective:
 - i) I am convinced he didn't want Jesus to go the way of the cross.
 - ii) It is almost as if Satan is using people to say to Jesus, "Look how everyone is mocking you and rejecting you. Don't go the way of the cross. It isn't necessary. Just show off you power and they will believe you. You can overthrow these Romans with the snap of a finger. Come on Jesus, don't let these Romans taunt you anymore." Obviously, Jesus overcame this temptation and focused on what God the Father called him to do.
 - iii) Jesus does this, among other reasons as a model for us. Jesus calls us to follow him. That often means rejection and mocking from non-believers. Jesus "just takes it" knowing the mission God the Father has for Him. In a similar sense, as followers of Jesus, we must focus on what God calls us to do.
 - iv) I am not saying we have to be martyrs. The bible does say that all believers will be persecuted in some way. (See 2nd Timothy 3:12). My point is as Christians we need to stay focused on what God calls us to do over whatever pain & suffering we have in this life.
17. Vs. 32: As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).
- a) Jesus in his weak state couldn't carry the cross.
 - b) The Romans picked someone at random and said in effect, "You there, grab that cross".
 - c) "Mark says that he (Simon) was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who may be referred to in Acts 19:33 and Romans 16:13" (Bible Expositor's Encyclopedia).
 - i) Isn't it interesting how by "coincidence" the man given the burden of carrying the cross (probably) became a follower of Jesus? It is an example of how God calls people ("pre-destined") to serve Him.
 - d) If you travel to Israel, you can see the hill called Golgotha. It is just outside the walls of the old city of Jerusalem.
 - i) When you read about the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, a common expression used is how the animals must be buried "outside the camp"
 - a) For example, in Leviticus 4, when the "whole assembly" commits some unintentional sin, the ashes of the bull are to be carried outside the camp. (Leviticus 4:12, 21). I see this as a word-picture of our Lord's sacrifice.
 - b) I emphasize the words "unintentional" based on one of Jesus' last statements from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:32, NIV)
 - e) The Latin word for Golgotha is "Calvary", which is a common Christian "buzz-word".
 - i) This reminds me of a classic bit of Christian poetry:
 - a) Jesus was buried on a cross of wood;
But made the hill on which it stood.
18. Verse 34: There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.
- a) Gall is a drug designed to make you numb and ignore the pain.
 - b) Jesus refused it. The idea is Jesus was to accept the "full wrath" of sin on the cross.

19. Verse 35: When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.
- a) Roman "payment" for the service of crucifixion was the soldiers got the condemned man's possessions. It is amazing to thing that while the creator of the Universe was on the cross, there were soldiers right below him gambling for his clothing.
 - b) I have read some commentaries about how when Jesus is stripped of his clothing, all races and nations can "relate" to Jesus. A naked (or close-to-naked) Jesus is a visual picture that is not tied to either any Jewish or Gentile culture.
 - c) Getting back to my theme of Satan's temptation, again, think of Satan saying "Come on Jesus, come down from the cross. Look, they don't care. They care more about your clothing than they do the fact you are dying for them."
 - d) Over the next page or two, I am going to refer to Psalm 22 several times.
 - i) This Psalm is very prophetic and written as if it was written from the cross itself.
 - a) This Psalm was written hundreds of years before crucifixion was invented.
 - ii) Jesus will quote the opening line Verse 46 as if to lead the reader to Psalm 22.
 - iii) In Verse 18 of Psalm 22 it says, "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." Verse 18 is prophetic of Verse 35 here in Matthew.
20. Verse 36: And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷ Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- a) You had to wonder what was going through the minds of these people sitting there.
 - b) They heard or saw Jesus perform miracles. Maybe they were waiting for one here.
 - c) The soldiers knew that man of the Jews had hoped Jesus was the Messiah. The sign above Jesus head said "King of the Jews".
 - d) The interesting thing about the charge is that Jesus is guilty of being King of the Jews.
 - i) God the Father's price for being their king was to suffer on their behalf.
 - ii) God the Father knew of the Jewish nation rejection of Jesus before the world began, and thus begun this "long term plan" to reconcile the problem of sin so as those who believe in the King of the Jews will live in His kingdom forever.
 - e) If you read this account in all 4 gospels, the inscription is a little different.
 - i) The idea is the same in all four gospels. They can be summarized this way:
 - a) Matthew: "This is Jesus [of Nazareth] the king of the Jews." (27:37)
 - b) Mark: "[This is Jesus of Nazareth] the king of the Jews." (15:26)
 - c) Luke: "This is [Jesus of Nazareth] the king of the Jews." (23:38)
 - d) John: "[This is] Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews." (19:19)
 - e) (Source: Geisler, N. L., & Howe, T. A. 1992. When critics ask : A popular handbook on Bible difficulties . Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.)
21. Verse 38: Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' "
- a) You can see Satan's temptation in the words, "Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" Until the very end, Satan was offering Jesus a "short cut".
 - b) These people wanted a "visual sign" that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - i) They refused to believe the miracles performed by Jesus in his lifetime.
 - ii) They refused to believe the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus.
 - iii) They figured, "well, if Jesus comes down, then they will believe him."
 - iv) The reality is not true. Even if Jesus did "come down", just like the previous miracles, I doubt people would change. Many of the world refuse to "bow the knee to anybody" and won't let Jesus rule over them.

22. Verse 44: In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.
- a) It is one thing to have people standing on the ground hurl insults at Jesus.
 - b) Imagine the "guy on the cross next door", also firing insults at you!
 - c) First of all, it reminds me of the principal, "Hurting people hurt people".
 - i) When people are in pain, they often take that pain out on innocent people.
 - d) Next, it gets back to my view that this is Satan's desperate attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross and not pay the price for sin.
 - e) We learn in Luke's Gospel that one of the two thieves repented and looked to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus said in effect that this man was saved. (See Luke 23:40-43).
 - i) For those who argue that you have to be baptized to be saved, I always respond with the fact that this guy on the cross was saved for eternity.
 - f) Besides Psalm 22, the other bible passage that predicts the crucifixion in detail is Isaiah 53.
 - i) Among the verses is this passage is: "Because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors (sinners)". (Isaiah 53:12b, NIV)
 - ii) Many see this reference in Isaiah to the fact Jesus was killed with two robbers.
23. Verse 45: From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.
- a) Some argue the "darkness" covered the world.
 - b) Some argue that the darkness was a solar eclipse. Here is why that is not possible.
 - i) The Jewish calendar is based on a lunar cycle. A new month begins on a new moon. The Passover takes place on the 10th day of that month, which is close to, or at a full moon. You cannot have a full solar eclipse unless it is a new (no) moon.
 - c) To a religious Jew, a time of darkness had to remind them of one of the plagues on Egypt.
 - i) One of the plagues on Egypt when the Jews were in bondage was "darkness".
 - ii) The darkness was so thick "it was felt". (Exodus 10:21)
 - iii) That darkness was there for three days (Exodus 10:22)
 - iv) Only the Jews could "see" for three days. (Exodus 10:23)
 - v) One can see how all of this is a word-picture of Jesus on the cross.
 - vi) Here in this three hours of darkness, is a word-picture tying to Exodus 10.
 - vii) Only those who would believe in Jesus can "see through the darkness" and believe the story of the Gospel.
24. Verse 46: About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- a) Jesus is crying out the opening line of Psalm 22, as if to draw the reader to the Psalm.
 - i) As I have stated, Psalm 22 was written roughly 500-600 years before Christ.
 - ii) It reads as if it were written by Jesus on the cross itself.
 - iii) Crucifixion was invented a few centuries after that Psalm was written.
 - iv) The key words in that Psalm, (to me), are, "They have pierced my hands and my feet. (Psalm 22b, NIV). David wrote that with no knowledge of crucifixion!.
 - b) This is the "dark-hour" of human history. This is the point in time where God the Father "turns his back" on Jesus to pay the price for sin. For that moment in time, Jesus is forsaken by God the Father for the payment of sin.
 - i) Because God the Father is perfect, he cannot even "look" upon sin in the sense that any sin whatsoever can be forgiven if we are to be in heaven.
 - a) "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong." (Habakkuk 1:13a, NIV)
 - ii) In a "sense" no sin of any man is forgiven. Jesus is simply bearing the penalty for all of our sins.

- c) There is a classical debate over whether Jesus spoke Hebrew or Greek or both.
 - i) In this passage Jesus is speaking in Aramaic, which is the “Hebrew” of that day.
 - ii) It is not known whether or not Jesus spoke Aramaic all the time and the gospel writers translated Jesus’ words into Greek, which was the common language of the greater region of that day, or Greek itself. We’ll have to ask him one day. ☺
25. Verse 47: When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."
⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."
- a) When Jesus said “El-oi” in Verse 46, some thought he meant Elijah”.
 - b) In John’s Gospel (19:28), we learn that Jesus second to last phrase spoken was “I thirst”.
 - i) When Jesus took this wine, he yelled out “It is finished” (John 19:30)
 - ii) The concept if “it is finished” meant the payment for sin is made.
 - c) If you remember in the Last Supper section, Jesus said he would not drink wine again until he drank it with his disciples in heaven (Matthew 26:29).
 - i) Did Jesus break that promise by taking this wine?
 - ii) One answer is Jesus was referring to the Passover Cup of wine which is a cup to remember God’ deliverance of the Jewish people.
 - iii) Others see this sip of vinegar as Jesus “completing” his mission on the cross.
26. Verse 50: And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.
- a) This verse marks the actual death of Jesus.
 - b) I believe the “crying out” was for the attention of the crowd around him.
 - c) To me, Jesus greatest pain was the separation from God the Father.
 - d) As painful as the scourging was, the crucifixion was, the taunting of the crowd was, and the temptation for Jesus to take a “short cut”, the greatest pain was the separation from God the Father. This is what Jesus prayed to avoid in the last chapter.
 - e) It was Jesus love that kept him on the cross.
 - i) His love to do the Father’s will and his love for mankind.
 - ii) Jesus understood that this eternal payment made it possible for us to spend eternity with God the Father. As Jesus understood, there is no other way.
27. Verse 51: At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵² The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.
- a) If you read Verses 51-53 in other translations, you get the impression it is all one sentence.
 - b) That is important because Verse 53 includes the phrase “after Jesus' resurrection”.
 - i) Others did not rise from the grave until after Jesus resurrection.,
 - ii) This is an important concept as Jesus is the first of “first-fruits” of those who rose.
 - iii) In Luke Chapter 16, we learn that holy men who died in the past are kept in a “good part of hell”. Tying this to 1st Corinthians, we learn that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead. Thus those who were resurrected in Matthew here did so after Jesus resurrection.
 - a) Paul said, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”. (1st Corinthians 15:20, NIV).
 - c) Back to the text, the moment of Jesus death marked the point where the temple curtain was torn. The historian Josephus records that the veil was 18 inches thick!
 - i) This veil separated a section of the temple called the “Holy of Holies”.
 - a) Only the High Priest could enter this section once per year to make atonement for the sins of the Nation of Israel.

- ii) The point of the veil being ripped is God the Father saying, "There no longer has to be a veil separating my presence from the people. There no longer has to be a need of continual animal sacrifices for sins. I, (God the Father) have ripped open the veil because Jesus' payment for sins has been accepted for sins."
 - iii) Note the symbolism in that the veil was torn "from top to bottom".
 - a) It is symbolic of God himself tearing the veil, down to "us" on earth.
 - d) The earthquake was simply God telling the locals that Jesus' crucifixion was significant and told the crowd that "what has happened here is significant."
 - e) You have to wonder what the Jewish religious leadership was thinking at this point.
 - i) In Acts 6:7, it says, "large number of priests became obedient to the faith". (NIV)
28. Verse 54: When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"
- a) Personally, I think that Centurion is in heaven right now. I don't know what happened to him for the rest of his life, but I think he saw all the signs and "figured it out".
 - b) Notice how even though this centurion was part of the people that was involved in Jesus' crucifixion, he still could proclaim "this is the son of God"
 - i) I take the view it is never too late to accept Jesus, no matter what crime you committed. You still have to pay the penalty to society, but no sin, other than the denial of Jesus as God is beyond forgiveness.
29. Verse 55: Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.
- a) You have to remember that when Jesus traveled around in the previous few chapters, it just wasn't "Jesus and the 12". There was probably a group of 50 people. Some of these women were followers of Jesus through most of his ministry. They were more of the "support team" behind the disciples.
 - b) It is interesting that none of the disciples, other than John was there at the cross (John 19:27), as they were busy running for their lives. Give these women some credit. Matthew gives them credit for being there when the disciples themselves were gone.
 - c) Some of these same women were the ones who also were privileged to be the first to see Jesus rise from the dead.
30. Verse 57: As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.
- a) Here we have the story of Joseph of Arimathea.
 - i) From Luke's Gospel, we get the impression he was a member of the religious ruling council ("The Sanhedrin") but did not vote for his death.
 - ii) His only fault was that he lacked the boldness to stand up for Jesus in front of the Council. That is not an unforgivable sin, just a "shame".
 - b) There is a classic joke about the conversation between Joseph of Arimathea and Pontius Pilate. Pilate asked, "why would you want to use your gravesite for a common criminal? Joseph responded, "It's only for the weekend." ☺
 - c) Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would have his grave among the "rich".
 - i) Notice in Verse 57 that Joseph is called a "rich man". (Isaiah 53:9a).
 - ii) "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (NIV)

31. Verse 62: The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."
- a) It is interesting to consider that the enemies of Jesus were aware that Jesus predicted he would rise on the third day, but the disciples didn't get it. (Reference: John 12:16)
 - b) It is comical to think about this from the point of view of Jesus' enemies:
 - i) The possibility that Jesus could actually rise from the dead never occurred to them. They were more worried about the disciples "claiming this to be true".
 - ii) Can you imagine, after Jesus rose again, how hard they must have looked trying to find the "missing body" of Jesus?
 - c) In Verse 64: The Pharisees said, "This last deception will be worse than the first."
 - i) What was the "first" deception they were referring to?
 - ii) Most likely, in their minds, it was Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.
 - d) Ever notice that the Jewish people violated the own no-work-on-the-Sabbath clause in order to approach Pilate about the guards and then "worked" to place the stone there?
32. Verse 65: "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.
- a) Personally, I hear a tone of cynicism in Pilate's voice.
 - i) He knew Jesus was framed and they did this out of jealousy.
 - b) The Pharisees had their own set of "religious police", but needed the Roman's permission to post guards in such a matter.
33. Let us wrap up the chapter:
- a) This story is very familiar to most of the readers and I tried to pick out some background facts and some personal applications. If I missed some key points, my apologies.
 - b) Matthew's intent in writing this was to present Jesus as the Promised Messiah.
 - i) Matthew goes to great extent to point out how Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies about his crucifixion. There are other prophecies he didn't bluntly quote that may be obvious to a student of the Old Testament.
 - ii) Matthew has the difficult task of trying to teach a Jewish audience that the Messiah must not only rule, he must first suffer the sins for mankind.
 - iii) Even some modern Orthodox Jews argue there must be "two Messiah's" because they can't reconcile the passages of a suffering Messiah with a ruling Messiah.
 - c) One last personal application to think about:
 - i) This is the "dark period" in the Gospel story of Jesus Christ.
 - ii) It is a good chapter to focus upon during the times in our lives when things seem at their worst.
 - iii) The good news is "Chapter 28 is coming". This is the story of the resurrection.
 - iv) Sometimes we get too bogged down in the suffering aspects of our lives, forgetting about the promised resurrection aspects of our lives in Chapter 28.
 - v) Here is an area where Catholics and Protestants differ on their focus.
 - a) Most Catholic churches have statues of Jesus on the cross. They focus on the "suffering Christ". Most Protestant churches have statues of an empty cross, focusing on the resurrected Christ.
 - b) Having some background in both groups, I can understand both:
 - c) To focus on the suffering Christ reminds us of the seriousness of our sins and makes you realize why Christ suffering and death was necessary.
 - d) To focus on the resurrected Christ reminds us of the hope of our future.
 - e) In realty, we as Christians need to be reminded of both at times.
 - d) Next week is only 20 verses and the last lesson. I promise to lighten up. ☺

34. Heavenly Father, We read these passages of our Lord's suffering and death, and the horror of it can be too much to comprehend. Let these passages always remind us of how serious you take sin and how much you want to keep it from our lives. We, like our Lord are given new life through his death and resurrection. Out of that fact, we live in gratitude and service. May you be glorified in all we do as we keep both aspects of the cross ("before and after") in focus. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen